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ABSTRACT

This report presents an assessment of the situation of homeless girls, paying particular attention to the issue of juvenile prostitution. A review of research on prostitutes was conducted, and common elements that seem to present themselves in these studies are identified, including sexual and/or physical abuse, runaway/throwaway status, dysfunctional families, and inadequate education. Motivations for entering into prostitution by girls living on the streets are discussed and the issues of street contacts, institutionalization, drugs, and excitement and adventure are considered. A discussion of aspects of street life includes sections on pimps, clients of prostitutes, rape, and health risks. Community approaches to the problem of juvenile prostitution are discussed and several community programs and service agencies operating in Portland, Oregon are described: (1) Project LUCK (Link Up the Community for Kids); (2) the Council for Prostitutional Alternatives; (3) Outside/In; (4) Greenhouse; (5) Harry's Mother; (6) Willamette Bridge; (7) Our New Beginnings; and (8) Girls Emancipation Program. It is recommended that Portland re-establish its Street Outreach program to reach adolescents on the street as soon as possible. Three points of intervention at the primary, secondary, and tertiary levels are suggested as useful components of a comprehensive program for breaking the cycle of victimization of juvenile prostitutes. (NB)

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NEEDS ASSESSMENT OF FEMALE STREET KIDS: CHILDREN IN DANGER

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Needs Assessment of Female Street Kids:
Children in Danger

Although an accurate estimate of the number of juvenile prostitutes nation-wide is difficult to ascertain, it is widely recognized that juvenile prostitution is a growing problem in this country (Beatty & Carlson, 1985). Along with the explosion in the population of the homeless, there is also an increase among the homeless of adolescent runaway and throwaway children (Marin, 1987). A typical scenario for a female juvenile entering into prostitution evolves as follows: most often the girl is a product of a history involving some sort of sexual and/or physical abuse and some form of abandonment. Seeing no other solution to her situation she runs to the streets where she discovers that resorting to illegal activities is about the only way to survive-- a persuasive pimp often helps her decision to enter into prostitution. On the streets the girl discovers that the abuse she left at home takes on only a slightly different form in victimization by her pimp and "johns", men that buy a prostitute. The girl encounters a third type of victimization in her experiences with the juvenile justice system due to the fact that the system views her, typically, not as a victim, but as an offender (Bracey, 1983).

In order to better understand why a girl begins selling her body as a commodity, it is useful to look at some of the common elements that seem to present themselves in studies of female juvenile prostitutes.

PRECIPITATING CONDITIONS

1. *Sexual and/or physical abuse*

In a study of 200 juvenile and adult female street prostitutes by Silbert and Pines (1982) in the San Francisco area, extremely high levels of childhood sexual abuse were documented. Results showed that 60% of the subjects had incurred some form of sexual abuse, by an average of two people each, over an average of a 20 month period. Two-thirds of these victims were abused by father-figures, of which 1/3 were the girl's father.

Step fathers constituted the majority of the other cases. The impact of the sexual victimization was severe, with 70% of the subjects reporting that early sexual exploitation had influenced their eventual entrance into prostitution. Sixty-two percent of the subjects had experienced physical abuse in the form of beatings quite regularly. In addition to the high incidences of sexual and physical abuse reported, 70% of the subjects reported that emotional abuse had been a serious problem in their home environment (Silbert & Pines, 1982).

Although the incidence of sexual exploitation among prostitutes appears to be much more prevalent than in the general population, it is also evident that it is not necessarily a precondition, nor is it a sufficient condition alone in producing prostitution (Bracey, 1983).

2. *Runaway/ Throwaway Status*

Runaways who have been sexually abused seem to be more vulnerable to the exploitation of prostitution than runaways that have not suffered a history of sexual abuse (Portland Task Force Report, 1987). Ninety-six percent of the juvenile prostitutes were runaways before entering into prostitution (Silbert & Pines, 1982). Reasons for running away from home are always multifactorial, yet the literature suggests that sexual abuse at home is one of the major reasons for leaving. Once on the streets, however, most of them have no way of surviving besides prostitution (Silbert & Pines, 1981).

Juveniles leaving home can be categorized into either runaway or throwaway status. In a study by Adams et al (1985), runaways were described as those leaving home because of perceived family conflict, alienation, and poor social relations. Many of these youths can and are likely to return home after a period of time. Throwaways, however, were described as youths who had been encouraged or asked to leave home. Throwaways are somewhat older on the average than runaways, with the majority being between the ages of 15 and 17. Runaways were typically between the ages of 11 and 15. In the Adams et al (1985) study, 90% of the street kids came from poor or working class homes. Running from stressful situations and/or being thrown out of their homes, places youths

on the streets with no viable resources for taking care of themselves. The reason for differentiating between the two groups becomes apparent when looking at street alternatives for these youths. Those with a family who is willing to work things out and genuinely wants them to return home will require different services from those who are entirely on their own and must be transitioned into being independent members of the community.

3. *Dysfunctional Family*

Generally the home relationships of juvenile prostitutes are poor, with a high incidence of separation, divorce, and battering (Brown, 1979). In Bracey's (1983) study of 32 young prostitutes, 17 reported having parents that were heavily involved with drugs or alcohol, providing a role model of running from problems rather than dealing with them. Families that are experiencing change, such as divorce, economic change, and moving to a new location, can also result in an environment that is conducive to runaway behavior, with youths trading in their crumbling family structure for an unknown world (Schaffer & DeBlassie, 1984).

4. *Education*

Juvenile prostitutes have little education, which results in few employment opportunities (Schaffer & DeBlassie, 1984). Acquiring academic credentials results for most people in the development of a future-oriented attitude about their life. Juvenile prostitutes with little education have learned, however, to manipulate their environments in hopes of achieving immediate short term rewards at the expense of long term rewards (Brown, 1979). Finding themselves on the streets, youths typically have enough money to last them 3 days. The immediate financial needs that these street kids face is only one factor leading them into the cycle of victimization that prostitution offers.

ENTRANCE MOTIVATIONS

1. *Street Contacts*

Studies by both Silbert & Pines (1981) and Bracey (1983) have shown that girls are rarely physically forced into prostitution. Girls are easy

targets for pimps, who initially provide them with approval, affection, and attention that the girls found lacking in their home life. Pimps often promise that the girl will be prostituting only until things get better for them financially (Bracey, 1983).

Unlike boys, for girls it is nearly impossible to be in "the business" without a pimp (Beatty & Carlson, 1985). Pimps have a very tight network through which they inform each other about "outlaws", girls working without a pimp. The pimp network does not allow the "outlaw" to exist on the streets for very long.

2. *Institutionalization*

It is possible for a girl to be incarcerated for such status offenses as running away, truancy, or sexual activity, and then she is labeled as deviant. Inside such settings, she will come into contact with prostitutes from whom she learns the business. Girls are disproportionately incarcerated for status offenses, two-thirds to one-third, compared to boys (Schaffer & DeBlassie, 1984).

3. *Drugs*

Brown (1979) suggests that a drug habit may be a contributing factor in introducing a girl to prostitution. Either "under-world" drug connections will bring her into contact with pimps and prostitutes, or her expensive habit will force her into selling her body (Brown, 1979, citing Gebhard, 1969). While the literature on precipitating drug addictions is mixed, most studies suggest that once involved in prostitution girls fall into the cycle of abusing drugs.

4. *Excitement & Adventure*

If a girl views the life of a prostitute as somehow glamorous, exciting, and adventurous, there is a good chance that the media has had an influence on her perception. This glamorization gives adolescents a totally unrealistic view of prostitution (Portland Task Force Report, 1987).

Once a girl has fallen into prostitution, the life she begins to lead is full of dangers on a multitude of dimensions. Some of the physical abuse is likely not to be entirely foreign to the girl, who has encountered similar forms of abuse at home. When she grows a bit older and comes to

understand what kind of life she has fallen into, she may or may not make the move to try to break from "the life" (Caplan, 1984).

ASPECTS OF STREET LIFE

1. *Pimps*

One of the most difficult aspects of prostitution to understand is the relationship between a prostitute and her pimp. The pimp provides a form of attention and caring that the girl interprets as "love", which increases her dependency on him. Studies indicate that physical abuse in the form of beatings is a rather common occurrence in a girl's relationship with her pimp. In the Silbert and Pines (1982) study, they found that 66% of the subjects had been beaten or physically abused by their pimp. Generally the violence occurs in situations where the girl has not earned enough money or is trying to withhold some of her earnings (Bracey, 1983). .

The girl generally becomes convinced that she deserves no better treatment, and the insults, threats, and beatings seem unavoidable. At the same time, the verbal and physical abuse helps to reinforce the girl's perception of herself as defective and flawed (Bracey, 1983). Pimps are very good at the art of psychological manipulation. A pimp often keeps a girl believing that she will only be on the street temporarily-- until he is out of his financial difficulty. In selling her body and turning her money over to the pimp she believes that she will get out soon (Bracey, 1983). Convinced that the pimp genuinely does care and denying the extremely negative aspects of the relationship, these girls can not break off these relationships without supportive alternatives (Portland Task Force Report, 1987).

If a pimp is arrested, prostitutes generally are hesitant to press charges against him due to fears of retaliation. Pimps have their own supportive underground networks that give a prostitute a very valid reason to be fearful (Portland Task Force Report, 1987).

2. *"Johns"*

The name "john" is given to a man who buys the services of a

prostitute. "Johns" arrested in Oregon for buying the services of a prostitute under the age of 18 are charged with rape and other charges of "offenses against persons" rather than under the prostitution statutes. Under Oregon law, juvenile prostitutes are considered to be accountable for their own victimization, and are arrested and incarcerated. Unfortunately "johns" are rarely arrested, and the arrest ratios show that they are arrested disproportionately to prostitutes. Prostitution is about the only criminal offense which the law does not reduce in the case of juveniles (Portland Task Force Report, 1987).

Prostitutes also suffer a great deal of physical and sexual abuse at the hands of "johns". In a study of 76 juvenile prostitutes by James (1976), 64% reported that they had been injured by buyers but that due to fear of criminal sanctions they did not seek police assistance. Abuse from a "john" can come in various forms such as customer rape, going beyond the agreed upon contract, "forced perversions", not being paid, and physical abuse in the form of beatings. Although one reason for having a pimp is for protection, only 9% of the subjects told their pimp about the abuse (Silbert & Pines, 1981). Occasionally a girl will encounter what is termed a "freak trick", or a "john" with the serious intent of physically injuring the prostitute. A girl is opening herself up to just about any form of danger and perversion when she gets in a car and goes with a "john." Many end up dead.

4. *Rape*

Silbert and Pines (1982), reported that 96% of their prostitute subjects were raped, that 84% of the cases were entirely unrelated to work, and the rapists were total strangers to the women. Most cases involved violence, and out of all of these victims of rape, only 7% sought some form of help (Silbert & Pines, 1982).

Juveniles on the street also are prime targets for other street crimes due to the fact that they live and work in high crime areas. Most don't feel that they have any protection and refuse to seek police assistance for fear that they will be taken in and turned in to the Youth Division (Bracey, 1983).

5. *Health Risks*

By engaging in sex with such a horrendous number of partners while rarely taking any precautions, prostitutes are prime targets for a number of sexually transmitted diseases. Most of these can be treated with either antibiotics or antiviral drugs but, unfortunately, the juvenile prostitute is rarely in a position of being offered any medical care.

The issue of AIDS is of major concern for this population. They are particularly at risk if they are IV drug users, which many of them are, or if they have engaged in sexual contact with a man who is an IV drug user or bisexual. The fact that two-thirds of prostitutes do not use contraceptives (Portland Task Force Report, 1987), however, illustrates a much more accurate picture of the potential this population has of contracting the disease and perhaps spreading it to other "johns." The lack of contraceptive use also brings with it the risk of pregnancy and abortion.

Drug and alcohol abuse are another aspect of street life that brings with it a multitude of health problems. The effects of drugs and alcohol seem to make life on the streets more bearable.

Caught in this lifestyle of continuous victimization, girls become desensitized to the abuse and accepts prostitution as her role in life. The majority of prostitutes don't get out until "they're all used up." However, no study has shown that these girls would not choose something else if they thought that there was an alternative to their situation. Unfortunately, most are suspicious of social agencies and law enforcement officials. They perceive most sources of help as moralizing and not providing the assistance they truly need to make the transition.

Pregnancy is one of the most frequent motivations for leaving "the life." If a girl does not leave prostitution as a result of pregnancy, frequent run-ins with the law and threats that she will be denied custody of her child may be incentive enough to lead her towards a "straight" life. Law enforcement and probation requirements undoubtedly play a large role in leading a girl to some form of agency help. Agencies must provide economic resources, skills training, and counseling services to help a girl make the transition to a new life.

COMMUNITY APPROACHES: PORTLAND, OREGON

It is estimated that there are approximately 500 youths surviving on the streets of Portland (Emergency Basic Needs Committee, 1986). This population appears to be fairly evenly divided between male and female juveniles. Typically when a juvenile is arrested for prostitution in Portland he or she is taken to the Juvenile Detention Hall. After remaining in custody for a short time they are often released, when possible, to their parents or placed in foster care. Once convicted a youth is court-ordered into the Court OPTIONS program which consists of counseling sessions, both group and individual, once a week. The court program, however, fails to provide what is needed for a girl who finds herself in this situation. The basic orientation is that the problem is located entirely in the girls and that there is something wrong with them. This form of classic blaming the victim is not helpful in reducing the problem of juvenile prostitution.

COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

Project L.U.C.K.

Project LUCK, which stands for Link Up the Community for Kids, was established as a result of the findings of a 1981 task force created to look at the situation of street kids in Portland (Beatty & Carlson, 1985). Project LUCK is an administrative organization coordinating the services of various youth serving agencies. Project LUCK contracts with various agencies to provide direct services to street youth, and provides public education emphasizing that juvenile prostitution is a form of child abuse. Through contract agencies, Project LUCK attempts to meet both short term emergency needs and longer term transitional needs of the street youth. To obtain services youth must make a commitment to leave the streets (Beatty & Carlson, 1985).

The Council for Prostitutional Alternatives (CPA)

While CPA, created in 1984, was not created solely for juveniles involved in prostitution, a large percentage (34%) of the clients are females between the ages of 16 and 21. Oregon law states that the Council can only assist girls and women over the age of 16, and that there can be no runaway report out on any girls accepted into the program.

It's goals are providing advocacy and financial assistance to prostitutes who had made a commitment to achieving a "straight" life style. The program provides the assistance necessary in all aspects of the lives of clients in transition. . CPA, through contract agencies, tries to provide clients with shelter, medical treatment, job training, detoxification programs, counseling, transportation, and child care. The only precondition necessary for obtaining assistance is that a prostitute must sign a contract making a commitment to stay off the streets. The money for personal needs is given directly to the women and girls. Reasoning that by providing personal expenses girls in transition have less reason to go back to the streets, and the client can engage in planning and achieving his or her independence from street life.

Funding for CPA comes primarily from city and county sources. Since January 1985, 279 participants have signed agreements with CPA. Of these 49 have graduated from the program and are leading legal lifestyles. One hundred and eighty participants have dropped out of the program, most of these were lost due to having had contact with their pimps. Currently there are 50 participants in the program (C.P.A. Report, 1987). Participants are placed in a program of one of the contract agencies for guidance, counseling, and direction. CPA contract agencies are the following; Our New Beginnings; Outside/In; and the Y.W.C.A. A new contract with another Y.W.C.A. in Portland's black ghetto area was established to begin providing services for ten more clients in May 1987. There is a long waiting list of prostitutes who want to get in to the program.

Of graduates, the average amount of time that each participant spent in the program prior to graduating was 7 months. The average amount of money spent on each participant was $1,400. Of drop outs, the average

length of time in the program was eight weeks, with $215.67 as the average amount of money spent on each. The total budget for fiscal year 1987-88 is $199,208.00, with $117,280.00 coming from the City of Portland, and $82,000.00 coming from Multnomah County (C.P.A. Report, 1987).

SERVICE AGENCIES

The agencies providing services to street youth in Portland are extremely complex due to the fact that they are decentralized. They also work closely together, sending referrals from agency to agency.

1. OUTSIDE/IN (OI)

Outside/In provides both emergency and transitional services. Short term services include intake, assessment, and crisis intervention counseling as well as an emergency food and shelter voucher system. Limited medical services are provided, by appointment only, on two days a week, and a new pre-natal service has been added. Drop in counseling sessions are provided by Outside/In crisis intervention counselors, but cases needing longer-term counseling and services are referred to Project LUCK's case management team. From this point if a youth agrees to making a commitment to getting off the streets and is authorized by the case management team, he or she will be placed in an appropriate program provided by an agency.

As well as an emergency housing voucher system, OI provides a transitional 90-day bed program for 10 youth at a given time. The participants in this program have made a commitment to leave the streets, have set a series of goals for themselves, and receive counseling and training to help them accomplish the transition. Services provided by other community agencies, such as drug and alcohol rehabilitation and job skills training, are utilized according to an individual's needs. Currently there are eight girls from CPA utilizing the services provided at Outside/In.

2. GREENHOUSE

Greenhouse is an agency that provides a walk-in shelter for street kids between the hours of 4 and 10 p.m. for five days a week. Funding for the program is provided by the Salvation Army and the Rotary Club. An evening meal is provided for any youth under the age of 21 that walks in off the street. Greenhouse is located in the "Camp" area of downtown Portland, where most of the juvenile male hustlers loiter. Also provided are clothing and the money for transportation for youths who wish to return home when Greenhouse closes down. During the first and the last hours individual counseling is provided. Both boys and girls utilize Greenhouse, some are regulars, but most leave the shelter at 10 p.m. with no alternative but the streets.

3. HARRY'S MOTHER (HM)

Most of the kids participating in the program at Harry's Mother are between the ages of 11 and 15, and most are runaways. If the kids are throwaways, they are referred to other programs. There is space for a total of 12-14 kids at a time for up to two weeks, the average stay is 9 days. Garfield House provides beds for seven of the youths. Volunteer shelter homes provide housing for another 5-7 kids, but they are not always reliable, especially during the holidays and summer vacation. Evangle Baptist Church has a home which provides housing for 4 girls at a time, and also looks for community volunteer homes.

Garfield House is se. up currently on a level system of increasing priviledges, but work is being done to change over to an individual goal system. In the morning kids may do volunteer work with agencies, such as the Burnside Hunger Project, if they are not attending school. In the afternoon, participants are in counseling sessions which address individual, group, and family needs.

The funding for this year's budget of $350,000 came from the Federal Government and United Way. Funding sources for Harry's Mother are not reliable, however, so each year is rather uncertain. The ultimate goal of the agency is to reunite the youth with his or her family if possible. They see about 400 kids a year and turn away over a hundred.

4. WILLAMETTE BRIDGE (WB)

WB, a new pilot program, serves kids who have been on the streets for several years with serious histories of prostitution and drug involvement. They only accept youths aged 16 and 17, male and female, with no viable family placement, who have no open CSD file, and have not been court mandated. They can serve 8 kids and can provide long term housing in a residency with 24 hour awake supervision.

Willamette Bridge teaches transition skills such as money management, how to access social or medical services, exploration of new recreational options, and help in finding and holding a job. When a juvenile enters the program he or she agrees to certain house rules of no weapons, drugs, violence, or sex, and creates a contract worked out in accordance with his or her future goals. The kids are very involved in creating and establishing aspects of the program, setting their own goals and weekly schedules. The staff reinforces the program structure and guidelines, assists the participants in problem-solving needs, and is there to enforce the rules. There is a mandatory weekly forum for all residents and staff members during which all program changes are negotiated and problems worked out. The average anticipated stay for a participant is 6 to 8 months. Upon moving into their own living situations participants are eligible for support services and follow-up for an additional 6 months.

5. OUR NEW BEGINNINGS (ONB)

ONB is a diversion correctional program for women and, as part of that program, they provide some counseling services for juvenile prostitutes. CPA helps the girls set up their own living situations in the community and provides them with money for living expenses. Currently there are 31 juvenile prostitutes utilizing the guidance services provided by this contract agency.

6. Y.W.C.A. GIRLS EMANCIPATION PROGRAM (GEP)

The GEP currently provides services for up to 17 girls at a time for an average of three months. Next year there will be space available for 25 girls. Funding for the program comes from the Soroptimist Club, County sources, and the Y.W.C.A. program via the United Way. In order to qualify for

the program the girls must have some violation, they can not be simply runaways. They must agree to a contract to stay off the streets when entering the program.

The program consists primarily of group counseling sessions where the girls negotiate issues and report progress on the attainment of individualized goals with the director of the program, the counselor in residence, and the ten program managers. Along with this each girl is paired with her own "coach." A coach is a volunteer from the community, and the role of the coach is to spend quality time with a girl, to develop a trusting relationship, and to serve as a role model.

CONCLUSIONS

Understanding the nature of this population and the severe damage that has been done to them by their histories of victimization and abuse, one begins to understand what agencies are facing in their attempts to "rescue" them and offer assistance in attaining an alternative life style. The damage has been done, and for many it is irreparable. Portland agencies are offering a network of services that are being used, but unfortunately, most of these girls are not able to view themselves in a new light. It is difficult for these girls to break entirely from their life on the streets. Many have babies who were fathered by their pimp. When involved in transitional programs they are forming relationships with other girls who are also attempting to leave the life. One girl said that "it is extremely difficult to leave the life unless you remove yourself from it completely." This is almost impossible for most girls.

There are those that do make a successful transition, however, and these cases are very encouraging. Those committed and strong enough in their convictions to stay "straight" could become a great asset to an agency if hired to counsel and encourage other prostitutes to make the transition. Prostitutes in transition automatically have a certain amount of trust for an ex-prostitute who has experienced the same forms of victimization, and these successful ex-prostitutes would make a wonderful role model. This

would give the ex-prostitute the chance to actually feel that she can do something to help the girls who are victimized by prostitution, and it would also provide needed employment.

That the process of reducing prostitution in this country will be a slow one is all too apparent when one looks at the societal attitudes towards women. When a judge rules that a working prostitute could not be a victim of rape, even when physically forced to engage in sex against her will (WHISPER, 1986), it is a display of the misogynist attitudes that must be overcome.

Aside from building a community awareness and working to educate the public as to the nature of prostitution and victimization in general, there are other more immediate steps that can be taken. Communities should continue to improve on agency programs by implementing what they are learning in the process of providing services. In particular, Portland should re-establish the Street Outreach program to try to catch these kids on the street at an earlier point in the series of destructive events. Another suggestion is the implementation of the use of "coaches" in other agency programs. The impact that a relationship with a strong, positive role model can have could be extremely valuable. A relationship of mutual understanding would be beneficial for both prostitutes and coaches.

In attempting to devise a comprehensive program for breaking the cycle of victimization, three general points of intervention should be included.

1. As a form of primary prevention, there should be some intervention in abusive homes. Children in grade school should be educated about the nature of incest and grown ups who give the "wrong kind of love."
2. As a form of secondary prevention, there should be intervention in places where runaways "hang out" with the goal of getting to them before they are introduced to the life of prostitution. Emergency services should be provided aimed at immediate physical, psychological, and social needs.
3. As a form of tertiary prevention, comprehensive transitional

programs that focus on changing the prostitute's self-concept by giving her a sense of control over her life and providing the help needed to make the transition from street life to independent living (Silbert & Pines,1982).

There should be some sort of treatment for society too. First of all, the men who are buying the services of juvenile prostitutes should be arrested, charged with child abuse, and the penalties should be made much more severe. It is time to take a closer look at the role of the "john." The second treatment for society must come in the form of public education about the realities of the lifestyle of victimization that prostitution entails.

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